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**EVOLUTION OF BRAZILIAN CIVIL-MILITARY  
RELATIONS: FROM PACTED TRANSITION TO LULA'S  
FOREIGN POLICY TOOL**

by

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FROM PACTED TRANSITION TO LULA'S FOREIGN POLICY TOOL**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Brazil transitioned to democracy from an authoritarian military regime just over twenty-six years ago, yet is still struggling to subject the military to effective civilian control. This thesis retraces the evolution of civil-military relations through three significant events that have shaped the current state of civil-military relations and complicated defense reforms in Brazil. First, the transition to democracy, a tenuous and complicated task, was further complicated by the death of the president elect thus weakening the position of the newly elected civilian government. Second, the military successfully contested attempts to establish a Ministry of Defense for the first decade of the democracy thus prolonging efforts at reform. Lastly, civilian's apathy and ignorance toward the military, perpetuated by a series of weak and ill prepared Ministers of Defense, further delayed progression beyond the status quo.

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

AI	Ato Institucional (Institutional Acts)
DL	Decree Law
DIAP	Departamento Intersindical de Assessoria Parlamentar (Interunion Department for Legislative Analysis)
ESG	Escola Superior de Guerra (Superior War College)
EMFA	Estado-Maior das Forças Armadas (Joint Chiefs of Staff)
FHC	Fernando Henrique Cardoso
MOD	Ministry of Defense
SIPAM	Sistema de Proteção da Amazônia (Amazon Protection System)
SIVAM	Sistema de Vigilância da Amazônia (Amazon Surveillance System)
SNI	Serviço Nacional de Informações (National Information Service)
UNSC	United Nations Security Council

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# I. INTRODUCTION

## A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

The history of Brazilian civil-military relations has been a tumultuous relationship to say the least. The country's history is filled with numerous military coups and authoritarian regimes. The most significant event in Brazilian civil-military relations is, without a doubt, the authoritarian military regime from 1964–1985. During this time, the military reigned with an iron fist, though perhaps not as heavy a fist as its neighbors Argentina and Chile, and increased their prerogatives and political strength. Eventually the military regime began to relinquish control and begrudgingly handed over the reins to a democratically elected president in 1985. Since that time, civilians have had a tough time institutionalizing civilian control of the military and diminishing the military's political influence.

Though it has been twenty-six years since civilians took control of the country, have they been able to assert effective civilian control over the military? On the surface, there seems to be several facts that point to the likelihood that civilians have indeed done just that. Unlike Argentina, there have been no military revolts or coup attempts since the transition to democracy. Additionally, due to the amount of time that has passed one might assume that reformations have taken place to subordinate the military thus subjecting them to civilian control and removing their political power. Lastly, Brazil is a seemingly peaceful country and is now a major world political and economic player. This, too, might lead one to the assumption that the domestic interworkings of the relationship between the civilian leadership and the military are functioning properly. This, however, is not the case and a closer look reveals calculated jockeying from both sides to contest and assert oneself in this tenuous relationship. The maneuvering has acted like a pendulum swaying back and forth as civilian control ebbed and flowed depending on who the president, minister of defense, or army chief was. The swaying has continued with no administration institutionalizing civilian control. That said, it appears that the current Minister of Defense, Nelson Jobim, is finally making headway in the battle to establish effective civilian control against the current of military

contestation. In order to assess the evolution of civilian control of the Brazilian military I will examine three major milestones in recent Brazilian civil-military relations: the negotiated transition to democracy, the establishment of the Ministry of Defense, and Lula's use of the military as a foreign policy tool.

## **B. IMPORTANCE**

Though the Brazilian military handed over control to civilians in 1985, they retained many of their prerogatives.<sup>1</sup> Wrangling prerogatives from the military establishment after a transition to democracy has proven to be a difficult and complicated task in every country.<sup>2</sup> In Brazil, this task was further complicated due to the death of the president elect in 1985 and the international debt crisis that took place throughout the 1980s.<sup>3</sup> Where Argentina, which endured several military revolts after the transition to democracy, and Chile, who transitioned much later than Brazil, have been able to establish effective civilian control under consolidated Ministries of Defense, remarkably Brazil has continued to struggle to do so. Instead of becoming institutionalized, civilian control has waxed and waned through presidents and Ministers of Defense since the transition through the Lula presidency. This is perhaps due to the "attention deficits" and lack of political will to establish enduring institutions that will successfully subordinate the military.<sup>4</sup> Effective civilian control of the military is arguably a fundamental building block of a successful democracy.<sup>5</sup> Though Huntington's work focuses on objective control of the military, this inherently drives a need for competent and knowledgeable civilian leadership.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Alfred Stepan, *Rethinking Military Politics: Brazil and the Southern Cone* (Princeton University Press, 1988).

<sup>2</sup> Thomas C. Bruneau, "Consolidating Civilian Brazil," *Third World Quarterly* 7, no. 4 (October 1985), pp. 973-987.

<sup>3</sup> Wendy Hunter, *Eroding Military Influence in Brazil: Politicians Against Soldiers* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

<sup>4</sup> David S. Pion-Berlin and Harold A. Trinkunas, "Attention Deficits: Why Politicians Ignore Defense Policy in Latin America," *Latin American Research Review* 42, no. 3 (2007), 76.

<sup>5</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State; the Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957), 450.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

For years, Brazil has been the “sleeping giant,” or “tomorrow’s big thing.” Tomorrow has finally arrived and Brazil finds itself in the center stage of the world arena. “Brazil Takes Off” proclaimed the cover of the November 14–20 2009 addition of *The Economist*.<sup>7</sup> The Brazilian economy has risen to eighth in the world in terms of GDP and economists see no end in sight.<sup>8</sup> In addition to economic prowess, Brazil is emerging as a major global player and has been pushing, with increasing pressure and validity, for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council (UNSC) as their international power has increased. To strengthen their pursuit of the permanent seat at the UNSC, Brazil has become one of the leading troop contributing nations to the United Nations and has led MINUSTAH (United Nation Stabilization Mission in Haiti) since 2004.<sup>9</sup> With Brazil on the rise globally and given their tumultuous history of civil-military relations, a closer look at the state of civil-military relations across time is warranted.

### C. PROBLEMS AND HYPOTHESES

Brazil is not the only Latin American country to encounter a lack of interest in the military by civilians. Because there are no external enemies to Brazil, the most dangerous threat typically comes from within. For much of Brazil’s history, civilians only concern with the military was mitigating the risk of coups. Politicians need votes from constituents to continue in their jobs and because there is no means of transferring military pandering into votes, by way of a civil service or large military industrial complex, then there is no need, other than coup mitigation, to pay attention to the military. I argue that this attention deficit is one of the reasons why twenty-six years has passed since the transition to democracy and Brazil is just now beginning to show signs of institutionalizing civilian control. This, too, is why the Brazilian military institution still wields considerable power and even until very recently rendered the Ministry of Defense as nothing more than a fragile empty shell of an institution.<sup>10</sup> Though a

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<sup>7</sup> *The Economist*, “Brazil Takes Off” (November 14–20 2009): 15.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Kai Michael Kenkel, “South America’s Emerging Power: Brazil as a Peacekeeper,” *International Peacekeeping* (8 December 2010, 2010), 644.

<sup>10</sup> Jorge Zaverucha, “The Fragility of the Brazilian Defense Ministry,” *Rev Sociol Polit* 2, no. Selected Edition (2006).

significant positive step for defense reform, the fact that Brazil just appointed the first Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs in September of 2010 is a telling example of the military's enduring autonomy.<sup>11</sup>

I hypothesize that the initial complexities of the transition, the military's strong domestic political influence, exacerbated by civilian incompetence and lack of civilian interest, has allowed the military to retain many prerogatives and political influence until very recent history. More specifically, I contend that the negotiated terms of the transition, frailty of the Ministry of Defense and continued placation of the military by civilians provided the armed forces with the autonomy necessary to resist proposed reforms.

#### **D. LITERATURE REVIEW**

In order to pursue this study, I will need to examine Brazilian civil-military relations literature across time. There has been extensive scholarly research done in this field with Wendy Hunter, on one side, arguing that there is effective civilian control through the erosion of military influence and Jorge Zaverucha, on the other arguing, against it. There are several scholars that fall between these two margins such as Bruneau, Dominguez, Mares, Pion-Berlin, Skidmore, and Stepan.

First, I will examine the historical background of Brazilian civilian-military relations literature covering the period just after the Estado Novo up to the transition to democracy. This will highlight the military's involvement in politics from a historical perspective and demonstrate the institutionalized and constitutionally mandated thinking that thrusts the military into the political realm. There is a vast amount of scholarly work done on Brazilian history and early Brazilian civil-military relations. I will rely most heavily on the highly respected work of Stepan, Skidmore and Bermeo to provide the evidence for this historical portion of my study.

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<sup>11</sup> Thomas C. Bruneau, "An Analysis of the Implications of Joint Military Structures in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Colombia," (paper prepared for SOUTHCOM as part of a research trip, 2011); *The Economist*, "Brazil and Peacekeeping: Policy, Not Altruism," 2010.

The second section of this work will divide Brazilian civil-military relations into three crucial turning points to assess the evolution military prerogatives, reserve domains, and state of civilian control. Each section: transition to democracy, creation of the MOD, and the Lula presidency will highlight important points in the evolution of contemporary Brazilian civil-military relations.

Though there is a shortage of quality analysis covering the most recent events, the transition to democracy and the resistance to the creation of the MOD are milestones that have received ample attention from scholars. For instance, Wendy Hunter's *Eroding Military Influence in Brazil: Politicians Against Soldiers* highlights how civilians were able to erode military prerogatives through budgetary reductions and constraints. Though the military's influence was diminished, she does point out that it still retained considerable insulation from civilian meddling. She uses the perspective of the civilian's rational choice to appease voters instead of the military as the baseline of her argument.<sup>12</sup> Stepan offers an alternative look at the transition, in his book *Rethinking Military Politics: Brazil and the Southern Cone*, analyzing the military's prerogatives de facto and de jure at the time of the transition.<sup>13</sup>

As I move forward in time to the second key civil-military milestone, the creation of the Ministry of Defense, I will use the works of Jorge Zaverucha, Stepan, and Hunter to show how the military successfully resisted its creation for a decade after the transition. Additionally, Zaverucha argues that the military has been able to resist the will of the weak Ministry of Defense (MOD) and shirk civilian authority since its creation.<sup>14</sup> According to Professor Thomas Bruneau, the weakness of the MOD is especially significant, in regards to civilian control, because it is one of the required institutions to support his civil-military relations trinity (democratic civilian control, effectiveness, and efficiency). Additionally he highlights that legislatures in established

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<sup>12</sup> Wendy Hunter, *Eroding Military Influence in Brazil: Politicians Against Soldiers*, 243.; David Pion-Berlin, *Civil-Military Relations in Latin America: New Analytical Perspectives* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 36–45.

<sup>13</sup> Alfred Stepan, *Rethinking Military Politics: Brazil and the Southern Cone* (Princeton University Press, 1988).

<sup>14</sup> Jorge Zaverucha, "Fragile Democracy and the Militarization of Public Safety in Brazil," *Latin American Perspectives* 27, no. 3, Violence, Coercion, and Rights in the Americas (May 2000), pp. 8–31.

democracies support all the elements of the trinity.<sup>15</sup> This, of course, is not the case in Brazil where the military maintains a great deal of autonomy and is subject to little legislative oversight.

Lastly, I will explore President Lula's battered run with defense ministers and the use of the military. This will include his use of the military as a foreign policy tool through United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKO). By and large, this literature supports the notion that involvement in UNPKO has positive effects on civilian control of troop-contributing nations.<sup>16</sup> Charles C. Moskos argues that these positive effects are derived from the additional attention given to the military by civilians during peace operations. Which gives credence to the work done by Pion-Berlin and Trinkunas on Latin American Militaries' attention deficits.<sup>17</sup> Moskos and others contend that through common international experiences the armed forces become "increasingly democratized, liberalized, and civilianized."<sup>18</sup> One such case that supports this theory is the increase in civilian control of the Argentine military after their involvement in UNPKO.<sup>19</sup>

In addition to the positive effects of increased civilian involvement purported by Moskos, Deborah L. Norden argues that engaging the military in UNPKO can ease civil-military tensions in post-authoritarian democracies by providing a professional, worthwhile, mission.<sup>20</sup> Once again, Argentina is the case study most often cited to

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<sup>15</sup> Thomas C. Bruneau, "Civil-Military Relations in Latin America: The Hedgehog and the Fox Revisited," *Revista Fuerzas Armadas y Sociedad* 19, no. 1 (2005), 111–131.

<sup>16</sup> Michael C. Desch, *Civilian Control of the Military: The Changing Security Environment* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 184; Deborah L. Norden, *Keeping the peace, outside and in: Argentina's UN missions*. *International Peacekeeping*. 1995. 2(3):330–349. <http://www.informaworld.com/10.1080/13533319508413565>; Charles C. Moskos, John Allen Williams and David R. Segal, *The Postmodern Military: Armed Forces After the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 286; Gabriel Marcella, *Warriors in Peacetime: The Military and Democracy in Latin America*, *New Directions for US Policy* (Ilford, England; Portland, Ore.: F. Cass, 1994), 163; Jon C. Pevehouse, "Democracy from the Outside-in? International Organizations and Democratization," *International Organizations* 56, no. 3 (2002), 515.

<sup>17</sup> David S. Pion-Berlin and Harold A. Trinkunas. "Attention Deficits: Why Politicians Ignore Defense Policy in Latin America." *Latin American Research Review* 42, no. 3 (2007): 76.

<sup>18</sup> Moskos, Williams, and Segal, *The Postmodern Military: Armed Forces After the Cold War*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 1–13.

<sup>19</sup> Deborah L. Norden, *Keeping the peace, outside and in: Argentina's UN missions*. *International Peacekeeping*. 1995. 2(3):330–349. < <http://www.informaworld.com/10.1080/13533319508413565>.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 346–347.

support this line of thinking since their military was pacified with UNPKO while civilians asserted control. Michael C. Desch and Gabriel Marcella come to a similar conclusion and contend that in order to ensure civilian rule in peacetime, civilian politicians have to encourage their armed forces to adopt externally focused missions.<sup>21</sup>

## **E. METHODS AND SOURCES**

In order to analyze the evolution of contemporary Brazilian civil-military relations, I will first need to establish the state of civil-military relations up to the transition to democracy. Then I will build upon the historical context to evaluate the three key periods in chronological order. I will use measures of civilian control that have been previously established by peer-reviewed research to determine if and where enclaves of military autonomy and prerogatives reside. I will then monitor these prerogatives and enclaves of autonomy over the last ten years in search of changes as the state of civil-military relations waxes and wanes. Using qualitative analysis, I will determine where, if any, change occurred. Evidence will be drawn from primary sources such as UN reports, newspaper and magazine articles, and status reports from watchdog groups and think tanks, as well as secondary sources.

## **F. THESIS OVERVIEW**

The thesis is will be organized as follows. Chapter II will cover the history of Brazilian civil-military relations from the beginning of the military dictatorship up to the transition to democracy. This background will provide the context necessary to understand the extent of the military influence in Brazil from 1964–1985. In Chapter III, I will analyze the evolution of Brazilian civilian-military relations by examining three key events: the transition to democracy, creation of the ministry of defense, and the Lula presidency. I will look into how civilian leadership in a newly democratized nation was able to erode military prerogatives through budgetary cuts and restraints, but not break the military’s enduring power and political influence. In the last section of Chapter III, I

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<sup>21</sup> Michael Desch, *Civilian Control of the Military: The Changing Security Environment*, 122; Gabriel Marcella, *Warriors in Peacetime: The Military and Democracy in Latin America*, New Directions for US Policy (Ilford, England; Portland, Ore: F. Cass, 1994), 163.

will examine President Lula's use of the military as a foreign policy tool and its effects on civil-military relations. Additionally, the analysis will bring to light civilian's inability to establish enduring institutions that effectively subordinate the military to civilian control. An evaluation cross time will determine where the remaining enclaves of autonomy and prerogatives reside.

In my conclusion, I will review the findings from the previous two chapters and provide possible reasons for the slow assertion of civilian control of the military by using Chile and Argentina as examples where civilians in a post-transition democracy successfully establish effective civilian control. Additionally, I will offer recommendations for areas where civilian leadership might further erode Brazilian military autonomy and thus solidify civilian control.

## **II. A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ORIGINS OF AUTHORITARIAN BRAZIL**

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

A snapshot of the current Brazilian civil-military climate does not provide adequate context to the larger historical picture and the long circuitous road to civilian control of the military. This chapter will retrace the evolution of Brazilian civil-military relations from just before the military government coup in 1964 up to just before the transition to democracy.

This analysis is necessary to document the institutionalization of Brazilian military involvement in politics, the entrenched mentality that military leadership has a right to assert themselves in politics, the sectors where civilian leadership has been able to assert control, and the pockets of autonomy the Brazilian Military has maintained across time. The sections in this chapter will cover the end of Estado Novo, the establishment of the military regime, and the slow path back to democracy.

### **B. THE MILITARY PUTS AN END TO ESTADO NOVO**

In hindsight, one might wonder why the majority of Brazilians stood by and allowed the military to depose the democratically elected president in 1964. The reality is that not only did they stand on the sidelines, many of them went knocking on the door of the barracks to act. The ambivalence of some, and the initiative of others, was of course, due to the tumultuous history leading up to the coup.

The political situation in Brazil began to deteriorate when Jânio Quadros resigned the presidency in August of 1961, and conservative groups within the military attempted to prevent Vice President João Goulart from replacing him. Bermeo describes the situation as a “doomed democracy.”<sup>22</sup> In addition to the near civil war that broke out between the conservatives in the military and the Third Army from Goulart’s home state of Rio Grande do Sul, Goulart’s assumption to the presidency was shrouded with worry

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<sup>22</sup> Nancy Bermeo, *Ordinary People in Extraordinary Times* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 69.

due to his known contacts with the Communist party.<sup>23</sup> Though Bermeo's survey data demonstrates that the populace stayed more or less near the center, over the next three years the situation appeared to deteriorate. There were constant public demonstrations, which made the situation appear to be worse than it was.<sup>24</sup> Goulart made a fatal mistake when he sided with military mutineers because it signaled his willingness to side with civilians on the left over even the most progressive elements on the right and undermine the military hierarchy.<sup>25</sup> Bermeo's research provides multiple reasons for the people's acquiescence to the military coup. Primarily, voter preferences were obscured by the multipolar system and the diversity of the Brazilian political parties.<sup>26</sup> Additionally, by 1964, Brazilians had experienced numerous mini-coups and the populace was accustomed to the military stepping in and removing unwanted or unpopular executives in times of political deadlock. Many people believed the military coup was somehow a guarantee that elections would be held.<sup>27</sup> This domestic "protection" was ingrained into military officers and continues even to present day as a constitutional obligation.<sup>28</sup> Though the 19 years preceding the 1964 coup were wrought with political instability and economic turmoil, democracy miraculously endured. Thomas Skidmore refers to this period as a "democratic interlude" between the authoritarian Estado Novo and the authoritarian military government.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Thomas E. Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil, 1930–1964: An Experiment in Democracy*, Updated. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 446.

<sup>24</sup> Nancy Bermeo, *Ordinary People in Extraordinary Times: The Citizenry and the Breakdown of Democracy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003), 79.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>27</sup> Juan J. Linz and Alfred C. Stepan, *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).

<sup>28</sup> The Brazilian military, especially the army, lobbied extensively to retain this prerogative during the Constituent Assembly in February 1987. They cited the U.S Constitution, which delegates national defense of enemies foreign and domestic to the military. See Stepan, *Rethinking Military Politics: Brazil and the Southern Cone*, 112.

<sup>29</sup> Alfred Stepan, *Authoritarian Brazil: Origins, Policies, and Future* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 3.

The broader global political scene contributed to the coup as well. The cold war had the elites fearing Vietnam and Cuban style national liberation movements. Brazilians foresaw a confrontation between revolutionaries and anti-communist military officers. The propertied classes feared an irreversible coup that would instill a socialist regime bent on an entire reformation of the social and economic structure.<sup>30</sup> Polarization of domestic and global politics was exacerbated by an economic crisis. By 1964, Brazil was experiencing a negative per capita growth, near hyperinflation and default on \$2 billion in international debts.<sup>31</sup> Brazil was spiraling out of control and the people were eager for stabilization.

One cannot overlook the United States' involvement with the opposition leading up to the coup. Like Brazilian politics, U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War was polarized and the view from Washington in the 1960s was similar to that of the Bush administration, "You are either with us or against us." Of course, at that time, anything left of center was considered a potential problem and our foreign policy reflected that fact. Though many of the U.S. officials interviewed by Knippers-Black denied having any knowledge or involvement of the coup, the empirical evidence she compiled overshadows their testimonies. Namely, the fact that the U.S. Defense Attaché Colonel Walters was considered to be the best friend of Castello Branco and was the first and last person to dine with Branco during his presidency.<sup>32</sup> Additionally, her interview with the unnamed CIA agent who proclaims that "the CIA had an important role in helping the conspirators" provides unequivocal proof of the impact the U.S. had on the coup.<sup>33</sup> U.S. funding to Brazil after the military coup further highlights the United States' support for the military regime.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Alfred Stepan, *Authoritarian Brazil: Origins, Policies, and Future* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 4.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>32</sup> Jan Knippers Black, *United States Penetration of Brazil* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977), 44.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

These forces working in tandem proved too much for democracy to bear and General Castello Branco took the reins of the nation from President Goulart. Skidmore remarks that “the moderates lost more than they dared guess in the coup of 1964.”<sup>35</sup>

### **C. AUTHORITARIAN BRAZIL: TWENTY-ONE YEARS OF MILITARY DICTATORSHIP**

The resilience of the military dictatorship proved to be astoundingly strong. Stabilization of the economy and economic growth gave the regime credibility while crackdowns on the opposition and blatant disregard for human rights detracted from it. Through the ebbs and flows over the twenty-one years, the regime maintained control and expanded military prerogatives. This section will highlight the prominent periods throughout the military dictatorship and trace the expansion and contraction of military political power. This analysis will reveal the magnitude and omnipresence the military regime was able to attain and then willing to relinquish, however slowly, but relinquish nonetheless.

#### **1. Establishing an Impregnable Regime: 1964–1974**

This coup was different from the mini-coups that Brazilians had experienced in the past. This military regime was here to stay and it was to persist for more than two decades. The initial regime led by Castello Branco was a coalition government comprised of military and civilian members that ranged from moderates to hard-liner authoritarians. Their primary goal was to purge the government of members of the old regime and stabilize the economy. To this end, the regime enacted *Atos Institucionais* (AIs) or Institutional Acts. The first of which was enacted just days after the coup and gave the president arbitrary powers for 90 days. Additionally, the military wasted no time establishing the *Serviço Nacional de Informações* (National Information Service or SNI) to monitor the pulse of the nation. Alfred Stepan remarks that of all the bureaucratic authoritarian regimes in Latin America, Brazil, without question, attained the highest level of statutory-based role expansion and nonpersonalistic

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<sup>35</sup> Alfred Stepan, *Authoritarian Brazil: Origins, Policies, and Future* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 5.

institutionalization within the state apparatus.<sup>36</sup> Other AIs that followed were designed to prevent political figures from the opposition from being able to compete against the regime.<sup>37</sup> What began as a coalition of moderates and hard-liners quickly began to move further and further right. Castello Branco, a moderate, found himself forced by the coalition to advocate hard-line policies as his presidency wore on. In 1967 Artur da Costa e Silva assumed the presidency and marked a new authoritarian turn. The following year the regime enacted AI5, which temporarily closed the Congress, censored the press, and took away the political rights of key leaders.<sup>38</sup> The decade that AI5 was imposed was one of sharp economic and human rights contrasts. Years of 10 percent growth in GDP fueled the regime while the public lived under the most repressive and brutal era of the military dictatorship.<sup>39</sup> The Costa e Silva regime allied with hard-liners and technocrats to stabilize the economy and suppress the left. Over the next few years, groups targeted for repression lived in fear. Thousands of people were killed, arrested, and tortured during this time.<sup>40</sup> Though the original intent of the SNI was to be a civil-military institution, the military leadership under the tutelage of General Emilio Garrastazu Medici from 1969–1974, expanded their prerogatives. At its conception, none of the top six positions in the SNI were military, but by the time Medici assumed the presidency all six were held by active duty generals.<sup>41</sup>

## **2. A Turning Point: The Geisel Presidency 1974–1979**

Though there were outside pressures on the military regime in Brazil in the mid-1970s, the pressures were not significant enough to force a return to democracy and

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<sup>36</sup> Alfred Stepan, *Rethinking Military Politics: Brazil and the Southern Cone* (Princeton University Press, 1988), 15.

<sup>37</sup> Juan E. Corradi, Patricia Weiss Fagen and Manuel A. Garretón Merino, *Fear at the Edge: State Terror and Resistance in Latin America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 50.

<sup>38</sup> Alfred Stepan, *Rethinking Military Politics: Brazil and the Southern Cone* (Princeton University Press, 1988), 16.

<sup>39</sup> Alfred Stepan, *Authoritarian Brazil: Origins, Policies, and Future* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 18.

<sup>40</sup> Alfred Stepan, *Rethinking Military Politics: Brazil and the Southern Cone* (Princeton University Press, 1988), 17.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

certainly nothing like those experienced in Chile and Argentina. Chile's Pinochet and Argentina's Galtieri both experienced fierce opposition in the early 1980s even after both regimes had established initiatives to prolong military rule. So why then did the Brazilian military regime decide to open the long path to democracy at the height of their power and control? According to Golbery, the military never planned to maintain control indefinitely, but hard-liners forced their agenda and powerful institutions, such as the SNI, were in place to ensure it persisted.

President Ernesto Geisel began the process known as the *Abertura* (political opening). Along with his Chief of Staff, General Golbery do Couto e Silva, they devised a plan to slowly relinquish power and return Brazil to democracy. Alfred Stepan had several interviews with Golbery and one interview with President Geisel that revealed the reasoning behind the *Abertura*. Stepan remarks that the responses given by both men build upon one another and that their individual recollections of the events corroborate. President Geisel knew that the country could not continue down the authoritarian path forever and noted that Castello Branco attempted an *Abertura*, but was overpowered by the hard-liners and AI5 was the result. With Castello Branco's failure in mind, President Geisel knew that he had to carefully plan a slow opening. The first step was to repeal AI5, which allowed freedom of the press for the first time in 10 years and allowed greater freedom of civil association. Additionally, he accepted the opposition's success in the legislative elections in November of 1974.<sup>42</sup> He also knew that the hard-liners were strongest in the security sectors of the government, such as the SNI, and that he would have to play his cards wisely to subordinate them.

#### **D. A SLOW, STEADY, REMARKABLE RETURN TO DEMOCRACY**

If Geisel and Golbery had the vision to start the *Abertura*, and thus the gradual return to democracy, why then did it take an additional 12 years? Social scientists have shown through an analysis of military doctrine that the military establishment lagged behind the military government. Stepan's research shows a progression of slow

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<sup>42</sup> Wendy Hunter, *Eroding Military Influence in Brazil: Politicians Against Soldiers* (The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 37.

liberalization from 1974 culminating with the 1981 graduating class of the *Escola Superior de Guerra* (ESG or Superior War College). The class of '81's end of class project was to address the question of "How to perfect democracy in Brazil?" Though their responses left much unsaid, the majority addressed four key concepts – opposition, participation, nongovernmental parties, and elections.<sup>43</sup> These class projects mark great strides, nonetheless slow, toward democracy. However positive this may be, Stepan remarks that none of the officers he interviewed in 1981–1982 thought that the opposition could or should gain the presidency in 1985.<sup>44</sup> As we shall see, this is yet again an example of the military lagging behind the trend.

The military government of the early 1980s was in a much more difficult position to monopolize control than the military government of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Much like the end of the democracy and the Goulart Presidency in 1964, a multitude of variables collided to bring down the military government.

Brazil faced the worst economic crisis in its history in 1981–1982, which reduced any insulation that favorable economic conditions had provided in the past.<sup>45</sup> The effective removal of the violent Left in 1972 reduced support to the military government from civilian elites. The independent growth of the security community, which Geisel and Golbery had worried about, sparked a current of distrust within the military. Lastly, events such as the Riocentro incident, perpetrated by the SNI, demoralized the military as an institution and delegitimized them in the eyes of the nation.

Though these events weakened the position of the military, they were still unwilling to hand over the presidency to the opposition. The regime was able to maintain control of the direction of the candidate process initially; they eventually lost control due to the *diretas já* (direct elections now) rallies and a corruption scandal that involved their

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<sup>43</sup> Alfred Stepan, *Rethinking Military Politics: Brazil and the Southern Cone* (Princeton University Press, 1988), 67.

<sup>44</sup> Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, 168.

<sup>45</sup> Alfred Stepan, *Rethinking Military Politics: Brazil and the Southern Cone* (Princeton University Press, 1988), 68.

candidate, Paulo Maluf. The opposition seized the day, setting aside many diverse groups' and politicians' objectives for the greater good of the country. They united their efforts behind Tancredo Neves who led *diretas já* rallies around the country. The *diretas já* rallies left Neves and other governors in the most powerful position the opposition had attained in more than two decades.<sup>46</sup> The televised two-hour meeting between ex-President Geisel and Neves was perhaps the most telling sign that the transition was near. President Geisel embraced Neves and privately assured him that a coup was unlikely.<sup>47</sup>

Neves won the Electoral College in January of 1985 and the military faced what Stepan calls a "The Dahlian Calculus." The military as an institution had to decide between reversing the results of the electoral college, which would be considered a *coup d' etat* and carry serious domestic and international repercussions, or accept the rule of a center-Left president whose costs were not too great.<sup>48</sup> Straight from Dahl's famous saying "the more the costs of suppression exceed the costs of toleration, the greater the chance for a competitive regime."<sup>49</sup> Thus, the competitive regime emerged.

## E. CONCLUSION

Though the military's roles in politics grew more robust during the military regime, the military had been involved in politics multiple times leading up to the takeover of the Estado Novo. This historical overview provides an enlightening context of the entrenched role the Brazilian military has in politics. Whether the military intended to rule the country long-term or not, history proved that the fields were ripe for a prolonged military regime. The hard-liners agenda over powered the more pragmatic domestically and favorable international economics combined with bipolar cold war foreign policy validated the authoritarian regime through its most oppressive years. The military only began to relinquish control after it had been in control for ten years, and it took an additional eleven years to finally make the transition to democracy. This chapter

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<sup>46</sup> Juan J. Linz and Alfred C. Stepan, *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

exposes the extent to which the military controlled the country. Namely, politics, congress, intelligence, and the press. Additionally, this chapter highlights the slow nature in which the military adapts to new agendas. Old habits die hard, and the military institution is no different. The next chapter will demonstrate how the military will carry many of their antiquated ways of thinking into the new democracy.

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### **III. THE EVOLUTION OF BRAZILIAN CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS: FROM THE TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY THROUGH THE LULA PRESIDENCY**

#### **A. INTRODUCTION**

The sections in this chapter will chronologically evaluate civil-military relations as the level of civilian control of the military sways back and forth, depending on civilian political power. The data here will demonstrate how the complications of the transition constrained the possibility for reforms in the early years of the democracy.<sup>50</sup> This chapter will be divided into three sections. The first derives from Wendy Hunter's work to demonstrate both sides of the civilian control coin, as the pendulum swings toward increased civilian control under Collor de Mello from 1990–1992, and away during the Franco administration from 1992–1995. The second section will analyze military's enduring political strength is brought to the forefront in the following section where the tribulations of consolidating the military under a ministry of defense are analyzed. In the last section I will examine Lula's initial troubles with the ministry of defense furthering substantiating the evidence that the armed forces are insulated and not subjected to effective civilian control.

#### **B. THE INFORMAL PACTED TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY AND THE SARNEY PRESIDENCY**

The military settled for a moderate president after more than two decades at the helm. Ex-Presidents Geisel and Figueiredo met with President elect Neves in private to negotiate the conditions of the transfer of power. These agreements were never made public, and were never established as a formal pact. Academics have ascertained that the civilians agreed to (1) uphold the 1979 Amnesty; (2) support the constituent assembly comprised of Congress, rather than independent individuals; (3) preserve some internal security functions for the military; and (4) maintain the existence of a high degree of

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<sup>50</sup> Juan J. Linz and Alfred C. Stepan, *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).

autonomy in the development of sophisticated military technology.<sup>51</sup> Whatever reservations the military may have had in regards to Neves' assumption of power, they were overcome by fate. Neves died in March before ever being sworn in as President.<sup>52</sup> His Vice-President Jose Sarney, a former president of the Partido Democrático Social (PDS or Democratic Social Party) and a staunch ally of the military regime, assumed the role as president.

With Sarney as president, the military was assured that none of the negotiated items, namely the 1979 amnesty, would be revoked. With that said, one must consider the position Sarney was in. Whether an ally of the military or not, he was in no position to assert himself and risk the fragile new democracy. Brazil was nothing like Argentina whose military had imploded after their military and foreign policy folly in the Malvinas. Furthermore, Argentina's Alfonsín campaigned on an anti-military platform and promised to right the wrongs done by the military regime.<sup>53</sup> The Brazilian military still wielded considerable power and a move to subordinate them too quickly could have resulted in a backlash or a coup attempt, which is precisely what Alfonsín endured from a weakly positioned Argentine military.

Not only were there no attempts to subordinate the military in the early years of the democracy, but the military still flexed their powers on their new civilian bosses. In fact, the military had such a significant influence on the Constituent Assembly that the constitution is in the category of "created under highly constrained circumstances."<sup>54</sup> Perhaps the most important and long lasting result from the military's influence on the Constituent Assembly was their successful blocking of parliamentarism. Brazil is well suited for a parliamentary system due to their weak and fragmented political parties. A

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<sup>51</sup> Wendy Hunter, *Eroding Military Influence in Brazil: Politicians Against Soldiers* (The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 39.

<sup>52</sup> Thomas Bruneau, "Consolidating Civilian Brazil," *Third World Quarterly* 7, no. 4 (October 1985): pp. 973–987.

<sup>53</sup> Deborah L. Norden, *Military Rebellion in Argentina: Between Coups and Consolidation* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 78.

<sup>54</sup> Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, 169.

parliamentary system would have greatly diminished the military's power and they successfully lobbied against it.<sup>55</sup> Thus, the Sarney presidency and the first 5 years of the return to democracy demonstrated no significant reduction in military prerogatives or national defense reform.

### **C. DIMINISHING MILITARY INFLUENCE AND PREROGATIVES: POLITICIANS CONCERNED WITH VOTES NOT COUPS**

Unlike a dictatorship, elected officials in a democracy must jockey for votes and keep their constituents happy. This rational fact led to the erosion of several of the military's prerogatives as civilian elected officials reallocated resources to their constituents in order to get reelected. With de facto and de jure military prerogatives at near all-time highs during the Sarney presidency, it is no surprise that military influence would subside from its peaks if democracy strengthened.<sup>56</sup> Hunter points out three areas where civilians have asserted themselves with surprisingly minimal successful contestation from the military: budget allocations, labor rights strikes, and control over the Amazon.

#### **1. Shrinking Military Budget**

Hunter argues that defense spending is a low priority for politicians, and despite significant lobbying and saber rattling, the military was unable to reverse the shrinking trend of their budget. She uses this as a demonstration of the diminished influence of the military and their subordination to politicians. I will not argue against the fact that defense spending is a low priority for Brazilian politicians, but using the budget as a measure of diminished military influence and subordination to civilian rule is inherently flawed. For a decade leading up to the transition to democracy the military had seen a dramatic decrease (negative 50 percent) in their budget.<sup>57</sup> In fact, though it may seem

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<sup>55</sup> Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, 170.

<sup>56</sup> Alfred Stepan, *Rethinking Military Politics: Brazil and the Southern Cone* (Princeton University Press, 1988), 93.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

counterintuitive, many within the Brazilian military hoped that the return to democracy would legitimize their budgetary requests and strengthen their lobby. The mere fact that many generals thought the lobby for military budget increase would be strengthened under civilian leadership alludes to their weak bargaining position even before the transition to democracy.<sup>58</sup> Additionally, the economic crisis in the 1980s, which was so profound that it came to be known as the “lost decade,” dashed the military’s hopes for an increased budget. These two factors alone cast doubt on the efficacy of using the budget as a measure of civilian control.

## 2. Labor Rights Strikes

Similar to her study of the military budget, Hunter isolates the tolerated labor rights movements and strikes as a measure of the military’s diminished power in the new democracy. Seeing strikes as an impediment to economic stabilization, the military regime passed laws that almost eliminated the ability to legally strike. Additionally the regime crippled labor unions by removing their wage campaigns and reducing their social security benefits thus extinguishing their source of patronage and funding.<sup>59</sup> These laws coupled with the regime’s crack down on labor unions left workers without a voice or an advocate. As to be expected, strikes fell precipitously from 302 in 1965 to zero in 1971.<sup>60</sup>

The Geisel presidency marked the *Abertura* and with that came the loosening of the grip on labor rights. He set up a group, which included members of the armed services and his Chief of Staff General Golbery, to revise labor laws in an attempt to relax some legislation without threatening the transition or vital national interest. They wrote the decree law (DL 1632) which softened the repercussions of engaging in an

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<sup>58</sup> Alfred Stepan, *Rethinking Military Politics: Brazil and the Southern Cone*, (Princeton University Press, 1988), 72.

<sup>59</sup> Wendy Hunter, *Eroding Military Influence in Brazil: Politicians Against Soldiers* (The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 77.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

illegal strike. Though labor rights activists such as future president Fernando Henrique Cardoso criticized DL 1632 for being too restrictive, it was a step toward liberalization while maintaining order.

Strike laws continued to be evaluated and the first civilian minister of labor after the transition to democracy was tasked to formulate new laws that would open Brazil to a less state-controlled form until the new constitution could make further inroads. This of course did not go over well with the military that had been imposing strike and labor laws for the past twenty years. The military lobbied and was initially successful in maintaining a restrictive bill similar to DL 1632. This would be their last success at restricting labor rights. The open political forum of the Constituent Assembly put the military at a disadvantage and their lobby was at a loss against the unified front of the Interunion Department for Legislative Advising (Departamento Intersindical de Assessoria Parlamentar or DIAP) which combine the efforts of more than 350 unions.<sup>61</sup>

Rather than demonstrating a subordinated position of the military, this success in labor rights advancement demonstrates the trend since Geisel's *Abertura* in 1974. The military's reluctance to willingly capitulate echoes Stephan's argument that the military institution has always lagged behind liberalization trends. With the weight of 350 unions behind them, DIAP was able to influence politicians' rational desire for votes. The military lobby had no such electoral pull to counter that weight.

### **3. Civil-Military Quarrel Over the Amazon**

The last military sphere of influence that Hunter utilizes as a measure of the military's diminished position is that of the Amazon. The military had a long history in the Amazon and had built outposts and garrisons throughout the region during the military regime. After the return to democracy, the military proposed a further development project called Calha Norte, which would secure the northern border with garrisons, airstrips, and outposts in order to protect against incursions by guerilla groups, drug traffickers and smugglers. The four million hectare plan was an ambitious one and

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<sup>61</sup> Wendy Hunter, *Eroding Military Influence in Brazil: Politicians Against Soldiers* (The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 83.

the Sarney government not only agreed to Calha Norte, but an additional six million hectares of land for training. The military's incursion along with that of businesses, such as gold mining, in the Amazon had been disrupting the culture of the Yanomami Indians since the mid-1960s. The Calha Norte project was to be no exception. The Yanomami Indians are one of the last remaining unassimilated groups of people in the world and have been of great interest to anthropologists and the international community. Due to pressure from interests groups, President Sarney did try to find a solution that would appease them by setting aside nineteen unconnected tracks of land totaling 2.4 million hectares and forcefully removed forty thousand gold miners from Yanomami lands.<sup>62</sup>

These meager measures to protect the Yanomami and Amazon were met with a bipolar response; fierce resistance from the military due to the encroachment in their sphere of influence and disappointment from the international community for such scant efforts of conservation. To make matters worse, Brazil's poor environmental record had become one of the most contentious sticking points in U.S.-Brazilian foreign relations. The external pressure on the Sarney, and the subsequent Collor and Franco administrations, became too much to bear. The foreign relations tribulations were compounded by Brazil's large amount of foreign debt acquired during the lost decade of the 1980s. The leverage attained by the debt allowed the international community to move the Amazon to center stage of foreign relations. The Collor administration took steps to reverse the ambitious Calha Norte program and devised a "Debt-for-Nature Swaps" program wherein environmental groups could purchase foreign debt at a discounted rate and donate the debt titles to local NGOs.<sup>63</sup>

Brazilian politics continued on this path as the democratically elected governments increasingly opened themselves to the international community. This trend rendered the military helpless to the infringement on their Amazonian prerogative and by 1993 the Calha Norte project had all but ceased to exist.<sup>64</sup> Disgruntled, the military

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<sup>62</sup> Wendy Hunter, *Eroding Military Influence in Brazil: Politicians Against Soldiers* (The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 124.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

attempted to revive the stalled Calha Norte program by rebranding it with a more environmental and national security focus. They proposed the SIPAM (Sistema de Proteção da Amazônia or Amazon Protection System) which promised environmental protection, tighter border controls, and protection of Indian rights. As a compromise President Franco countered with SIVAM (Sistema de Vigilância da Amazônia or Amazon Surveillance System) which was to consist of satellites, environmental sensors and an integrated communications system. Though the primary focus of SIVAM was environmental, there were national security and geopolitical concerns apparent.<sup>65</sup>

Hunter points out that this reassertion or expansion of the military coincides with Franco's weak political position. Where Collor had been able to assert himself due to his political strength, Franco had to give in to the military's pressure. Hunter's example does demonstrate a regression in the military's influence in relation to the political strength of the executive, but it simultaneously demonstrates their enduring influence and ability to regain prerogatives once held.

#### **4. Conclusions from Wendy Hunter's Assessment of Brazilian Military Influence**

Hunter's study of the Brazilian military sheds much light on the state of civil-military relations in the first decade after the transition to democracy. For the most part, her analysis does demonstrate areas where military prerogatives were diminished. As I stated at the onset of this section, military prerogatives were at an all time high just after the transition to democracy and it is only rational that they would wane as democracy took hold. Though prerogatives were diminished, I demonstrated potential flaws in Hunter's measures. Most importantly, what Hunter's study leaves us pondering is whether the waning of the prerogatives and incursion of civilians into the military's spheres of influence equals efficient and effective civilian control. The fact that the military did not stage a coup simply because the democratically elected government encroached on their prerogatives does not answer this question. Furthermore, her analysis demonstrates the waxing and waning of civilian assertion depending on the

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<sup>65</sup> Thomaz Guedes da Costa, "Brazil's SIVAM: As it Monitors the Amazon, Will it Fulfill its Human Security Promise?" *Environmental Change and Security Project*, Issue 7, (2001).

political power of the civilians. Where Collor was able to make inroads against the military due to his political strength, Franco was not because he was politically *fraco*. What her analysis does bring to light is the lack of enduring institutionalized inroads that are required to attain effective civilian control of the military. The following section will highlight the numerous difficulties and setbacks civilians suffered in order to establish a Ministry of Defense.

#### **D. THE HAPHAZARD ESTABLISHMENT AND PROLONGED WEAKNESS OF THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE AS A MEASURE OF INEFFECTIVE CIVILIAN CONTROL**

Though attempts were made, no president in the first decade after the return of democracy was able to establish a Brazilian Ministry of Defense.<sup>66</sup> This was a direct result of military contestation and the military ministers desire to retain their political voice and link to the president. At the time, the head of each branch wielded his own political influence as a state minister. Consolidating them under a single defense minister would have weakened their political voice. Additionally, the army feared that they would lose their long-held position of power over the Navy and the Air Force, and in contrast, the Navy and the Air Force feared a Ministry of Defense would favor the Army. These factors provided enough impetus for each of the branches to resist the ministry's establishment for the first decade of democratic rule.

##### **1. Long Circuitous Road to Establishing a Ministry of Defense**

President Cardoso, commonly known by his initials FHC, made the establishment of a Ministry of Defense one of his campaign promises. With Brazil on the rise on the international stage, FHC wanted to establish a Ministry of Defense (MOD) to exhibit civilian control of the military and move Brazil in line with the model of modern democracies. His appointment of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Estado-Maior das Forças Armadas, EMFA), General Benedito Onofre Leonel, to the task of establishing the new ministry alluded to the military influence the new ministry would

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<sup>66</sup> Jorge I. Domínguez, *International Security and Democracy: Latin America and the Caribbean in the Post-Cold War Era* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1998), 107; Hunter, *Eroding Military Influence in Brazil: Politicians Against Soldiers*, 45–47.

have.<sup>67</sup> This was to be a difficult task and the military was not going to simply capitulate. FHC seemed to realize the position his administration was in and began a series of monetary incentives. He purposed dramatic pay increases for the military while the rest of government wages were being cut as part of the Real Plan. Additionally, he increased military spending for modernization programs.<sup>68</sup> These efforts eased the potential for contestation to the MOD.

As is the case with many unachievable campaign promises, this too would fall by the wayside during FHC's first term in office. It was not until his second term in August of 1999 that the Ministry of Defense was haphazardly created. FHC announced the creation of the MOD as a political maneuver just one week after Argentine President Carlos Menem had declared that a seat for Latin American countries on the UNSC should be temporary, rather than permanent.<sup>69</sup> In addition to its arbitrary creation, the Brazilian MOD did not follow the strong North American model due to military officials declaring that it was not suited for Brazil. Instead, the MOD was given limited powers and was to be, as federal congressman Benito Gama stated, "The Queen of England" wherein the defense minister would reign but not govern.<sup>70</sup>

The creation of the MOD did however strip the heads of the armed forces of their state minister titles. That said, the heads of the armed forces still held significant power through their membership on the *Conselho de Defesa Nacional* (National Defense Council), *Câmara de Relações Exteriores* and *Defesa Nacional do Conselho de Governo* (Chamber of Foreign Relations and National Defense of Government Council).<sup>71</sup> Additionally, though no longer state ministers, the military commanders

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<sup>67</sup> Jorge Zaverucha, "The fragility of the Brazilian Defense Ministry," Translated by Meryl Adelman, *Rev. Sociol. Polit.* [online]. 2006, vol. 2.

<sup>68</sup> Joao R. Martins Filho and Daniel Zirker, "The Brazilian Military under Cardoso: Overcoming the Identity Crisis." *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, 42:3, (2000), 149–153

<sup>69</sup> Jorge Zaverucha, "The fragility of the Brazilian Defense Ministry."

<sup>70</sup> Jorge Zaverucha, "Fragile Democracy and the Militarization of Public Safety in Brazil." *Latin American Perspectives* 27, no. 3, Violence, Coercion, and Rights in the Americas (May 2000), 8–31.

<sup>71</sup> Jorge Zaverucha, "The fragility of the Brazilian Defense Ministry."

retained the legal status as ministers which provided a certain legal insulation in which only the *Supremo Tribunal Federal* (Federal Supreme Court) can press lawsuits against them.

## **2. Military Contestation: Defense Ministers Capitulate or be Sacked**

Though Hunter's analysis of the military's influence in Brazil does show areas where civilians made inroads during the first ten years of democracy, her interpretation leaves the reader with a much rosier picture than I believe to be the case. The difficulties endured by defense ministers after the creation of the MOD underscores the reality of the state of civil-military relations in Brazil.

### ***a. A Short Lived Reign by the First Defense Minister of Brazil***

FHC wanted to appoint a diplomat as the first Minister of Defense, but the rivalry between the armed forces and the *Itamaraty* (Ministry of External Relations) forced him to find an alternate. In what appeared to be throwing a friend a political bone, he chose Sen. Élcio Álvares, who had recently been defeated in his home state. Unfortunately, Álvares was setup for failure. He was not sworn in until six months after taking office and thus forced to work as "Acting" Minister of Defense which required him to get approval signatures from the heads to the armed forces, his subordinates, for initiatives that began in his office. Álvares' decline came when it was reported that, while working as a lawyer, he, his assistant, and his brother had counseled clients on the drug trade. The military commanders took this opportunity to speak out against Álvares. In blatant insubordination, Brigadier General Brauer spoke out declaring that he would not counsel his superior.<sup>72</sup> The situation continued to deteriorate forcing FHC to intervene. He fired Brigadier Brauer and requested Álvares' assistant to resign. Álvares was spared this time but would not last much longer.<sup>73</sup>

Brigadier Brauer's removal sparked discontent and much saber rattling throughout the Brazilian Air Force. They missed no opportunity to show their respect

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<sup>72</sup> Jorge Zaverucha, "The fragility of the Brazilian Defense Ministry."

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

and admiration for Brigadier Brauer while giving their civilian leadership the cold shoulder. Retired officers began to hold meetings in solidarity for Brigadier Brauer. This building insurrection put Álvares between a rock and a hard place.

Ultimately, Álvares' fall was due to the way he handled a case of excessive force during a New Years Eve party in Forte de Copacabana. Two photographers that had been invited to the party hosted by FHC were beaten by upset Army soldiers. Realizing the precarious positions he was in and not wanting to cause additional strife between he and the military, Álvares chose to protect the military instead of the President. This choice did not bode well for his eight-month career as defense minister and FHC sacked him a few days later.<sup>74</sup>

***b. Geraldo Quintão: The Amiable Defense Minister***

However amiable, the start to his run as defense minister was a rocky one. Not long after his appointment, the Air Force launched an inquiry into his use of Air Force flights to return to Sao Paolo to visit his wife while he was serving as Attorney General. The investigation was made public and marred his reputation. In the end, he was cleared of any wrongdoing but the message had been sent, keep the military happy and keep your job. Rock the boat, and lose it. FHC too would soon come to understand the strength of military contestation. FHC decided to fire Army Commander General Gleuber Vieira for critical statements he had made. The military's reaction was swift and overwhelming: 155 generals from across the nation immediately met in Brasilia as an act of defiance. Realizing the gravity of the crisis, FHC went back on his decision and reinstated General Gleuber.

The maneuvering of military contestation countered by civilian acquiescence continued through the rest of FHC and Quintão's tenure. The military made it as difficult for Quintão as possible while he went out of his way to appease them. In one attempt to please the military, Quintão stepped way out of bounds by criticizing former President Collor for demarcating land for the Yanomami Indians and called him

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<sup>74</sup> Jorge Zaverucha, "The fragility of the Brazilian Defense Ministry."

“incompetent.”<sup>75</sup> FHC further placated the military by stating “...If there is one branch of the Brazilian State which has worked in an absolutely impeccable manner, within the rules of democracy, it is the Defense Ministry”.<sup>76</sup> Quintão’s willingness to bend to military pressure ensured his tenure as defense minister would not be interrupted by military contestation and he left his position in the military’s good graces.

## **E. PRESIDENT LULA’S BATTERED RUN WITH DEFENSE MINISTERS AND ALTERNATIVE USES OF THE MILITARY**

Like his predecessors, Lula had a rocky start to civil-military relations. Blatant insubordination by the Chief of Staff of the Army resulted in the resignation of his first minister of defense and, after a year and a half of interim leadership by the Vice President, he appointed his friend who was subsequently sacked for his incompetence in handling military air traffic controllers. These events coincide with Lula’s decision to contribute more troops to UNPKO and lead the mission in Haiti. Scholars have proven that the international exposure attained while on UNPKO can have positive effects on civilian control of the military if the domestic variables are correct.<sup>77</sup> Given that the success of civilian control has been directly related to the competence and leadership capacity of the previous five ministers of defense, Nelson Jobim just might be the leader necessary to instill reform during this crucial time.

### **1. Jose Viegas: Clash of Old Rivals**

Lula seemingly broke through the old rivalry between the military and the *Itamaraty* by nominating Jose Viegas, a diplomat, to the MOD. This was of course after Lula had vetted Viegas through three military commanders from the FHC administration. Their thumbs up signaled their confidence that he could be controlled by the current military leadership. Their assumption was incorrect. Viegas did not take any lessons

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<sup>75</sup> Jorge Zaverucha, "The fragility of the Brazilian Defense Ministry."

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Jorge I. Domínguez, *International Security and Democracy: Latin America and the Caribbean in the Post-Cold War Era* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1998), 128; David R Mares, *Civil-Military Relations: Building Democracy and regional Security in Latin America, Southern Asia and Central Europe*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1998, 227.

from his predecessors and began to make major, displeasing, changes to the military. He criticized the Army for their lack of effort on a rescue mission, restructured the ESG's course syllabus, and approved the economic department's recommendation not to raise military wages. The military responded in their typical fashion by openly contesting their superior in acts of insubordination. Most notably, and most central to this study, is Army Commander General Albuquerque's autonomous appointments for the United Nation (UN) Peacekeeping mission in Haiti. General Albuquerque not only appointed the commander of the UN forces to Haiti, but the commander of the Brazilian officers as well.<sup>78</sup> However egregious that may be, the worst acts of insubordination were yet to come.

A Brazilian journal published photos of Vladimir Herzog, a journalist that was tortured and assassinated by the military in 1975. In the most outrageous act of defiance yet, the Army issued a statement, without coordinating with the MOD or Lula, that proclaimed it had not changed its convictions about what had happen in that period of history.<sup>79</sup> Viegas was appalled and demanded the statement be revised. After repeated versions were denied by Viegas, Lula flew to Brasilia to personally ensure the statement was curtailed. Astonishingly, Gen Albuquerque was not fired or much less reprimanded for his multitude of insubordinate acts. Viegas had had enough and wrote a scathing letter of resignation detailing the military's antiquated mind set. Lula appointed Vice President Jose de Alencar to fill the role as defense minister and chose to keep General Albuquerque on as head of the Army.<sup>80</sup>

## **2. Waldir Pires: Incompetent Crony**

Alencar wasted no time to reassure the military that he was not interested in the past and assumed a passive role as defense minister. Lula did not make haste to find an adequate replacement that would relieve the additional duty from his vice president and it

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<sup>78</sup> Jorge Zaverucha, "The fragility of the Brazilian Defense Ministry," Translated by Meryl Adelman, *Rev. Sociol. Polit.* [online]. 2006, vol. 2.

<sup>79</sup> "Brazil's Armed Forces: Resurrecting the Right to History," *The Economist* 27 November (2004), 55.

<sup>80</sup> "Ibid.

wasn't until a year and a half after Viegas resigned that Lula replaced him with his old friend Waldir Pires. Whether due to incompetence or military contestation, Pires, too, found it difficult to enforce control over the military.<sup>81</sup> Pires found few allies in his new office and soon found senators and military leaders alike requesting his resignation.<sup>82</sup> As pressures mounted and rumors spread of his potential senility, a breakdown in the air traffic control system caused a TAM flight to crash killing 200 people. The country's military run aviation system was subsequently shut down and Pires received heavy criticism for his inability to control his subordinates.<sup>83</sup>

### **3. A Potential Turing Point for Institutionalized Effective Civilian Control of the Military: An External Peacekeeping Mission and a Competent Minister of Defense**

The Brazilian military has struggled with an identity crisis since the transition to democracy. With no regional enemies and a history of internally focused missions, the armed forces looked to the Amazon to fill the void. This is in contrast to the military of Argentina who quickly shifted their focus outward and began working in tandem with the ministry of foreign affairs as a foreign policy tool in UNPKO. There is a large body of literature that supports the notion that involvement in UNPKO has positive effects on civilian control of troop-contributing nations and Argentina is often used as a test case.<sup>84</sup> Charles C. Moskos argues that these positive effects are derived from the additional attention given to the military by civilians during peace operations. He and others contend that through common international experiences the armed forces become "increasingly democratized, liberalized, and civilianized."<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Alan Clendenning, "Brazil Aviation Chief Fired," *USA TODAY*, July 25, 2007.

<sup>82</sup> "Deputados pede a demissão do Ministro Waldir Pires," *Reporter News*, June 12, 2006, Nacional section. <http://www.reporternews.com.br/noticia/158710/Deputados-pede-a-demiss%E3o-do-Ministro-Waldir-Pires>.

<sup>83</sup> *Brazil Minister Fired in Wake of Deadly Plane Crash* (Brasilia, Brazil: [2007]), <http://www.cnn.com/2007/WORLD/americas/07/25/brazil.air.reut/index.html>.

<sup>84</sup> Michael Desch, *Civilian Control of the Military: The Changing Security Environment*, 184.; Norden, *Keeping the Peace, Outside and in: Argentina's UN Missions*, 330; Moskos, Williams and Segal, *The Postmodern Military: Armed Forces After the Cold War*, 286.; Marcella, *Warriors in Peacetime: The Military and Democracy in Latin America, New Directions for US Policy*, 163.; Pevehouse, *Democracy from the Outside-in? International Organizations and Democratization*, 515.

<sup>85</sup> Moskos, Williams and Segal, *The Postmodern Military: Armed Forces After the Cold War*, 1–13.

This could very well be what is transpiring in Brazil. Lula replaced Pires with Jobim Nelson, an accomplished politician and judge that had served as the Minister of Justice. Jobim did not waste time in taking steps to institutionalize civilian control of the military. In 2008, just one year after taking office, he released the National Defense Strategy which outlines reforms that will establish processes to permanently subordinate the military to civilian control such as: establishing a civil service, moving the ESG to Brasilia allow more civilian participation, and providing incentives for civilians to involve with the military.<sup>86</sup> Though FHC published a National Defense plan and achieved nothing, these reforms address the civilian's attention deficit and not the military disobedience or insubordination. The hope is that increased civilian interest in national defense will grow a cadre of civilian with knowledge of defense matter to balance out the current information asymmetry.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Lula Da Silva, Luiz Inacio, Nelson Jobim and Roberto Mangabeira Unger, *National Strategy of Defense*, 2008, [www.defesa.gov.br](http://www.defesa.gov.br).

<sup>87</sup> Thomas C. Bruneau, "An Analysis of the Implications of Joint Military Structures in Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Colombia," (paper prepared for SOUTHCOM as part of a research trip, 2011).

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## IV. CONCLUSIONS

Given the lack of defense reform over the past twenty-six years, it is easy to forget that Brazil transitioned to democracy longer ago than the total time it lived under authoritarian military rule. The twenty-six years flew by in a political blink of an eye without significant contestation or revolt by the military or effective installation of control measures by civilians. Initially slowed by the complexities of transition, defense reform was placed on the back burner as soon as politicians realized they no longer had to pander to the military to prevent coups. Similarly, there was no incentive for civilians to get involved in defense issues nor would any politician with a viable career want to get involved. As evidenced by the minor successes and major failures of the first six Ministers of Defense of Brazil, the fragile shell of the institution is drastically influenced by the leadership of the personality appointed to the position of Defense Minister. The analysis of the difficulties FHC had in establishing the MOD, the tribulations each defense minister and president has had with the MOD, and the latitude given to the heads of the armed forces, reveals two things. First, it demonstrates the lack of political will to expend the political capital on an endeavor that cannot be translated into votes. Additionally, this acquiescence by civilians to military contestation further substantiates the notion that civilians are apathetic toward defense policy and only concern themselves with mitigating coups. Second, it exposes a reserve domain of the military's enduring strength over and autonomy from civilian control. Their ability to render the defense minister, and at times the president, ineffective is a hallmark of the power of the military institution.

Though the reforms now implementing could be construed simply as another pendulum swing in favor of civilian control, I have a sanguine outlook on the future of effective civilian control of the Brazilian military. Like the Argentine, military shortly after their transition to democracy, the Brazilian military is preoccupied and pacified, due to the increased wages, by the externally focused foreign policy mission of UNPKO. Though nowhere near the same percentage of the Brazilian military is involved in UNPKO as the Argentine military, the preoccupation with a positive external mission is a

step in the right direction. Additionally, the reforms proposed by Jobim are not the actions of an amiable defense minister. He is seizing this opportunity to permanently establish effective civilian control.

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